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ABSTRACT

An innovative, flexible scheduling technique for advanced levels of a foreign language program is described. The technique, predicated on individualized pacing and continuous progress, is generalizable to all elective programs, and offers a workable solution to satisfy the enrollment "numbers game" and to lend breadth and depth to the curricula of small schools and colleges. Any student beyond the first year, regardless of age and language being studied, can schedule "Advanced Foreign Language" during the hours where this option appears on the master schedule. Students negotiate long-term contracts each quarter and short-term contracts on a daily/weekly basis. For each core lesson, students are provided a checklist that details all the requirements for the lesson and facilitates recordkeeping. In contrast to teacher-center instruction, this individualized instructional method requires teachers to: expend more energy and concentrated effort, have a stronger grasp of the subject matter, keep more complex records, and adjust to being facilitators rather than the center of attention. Appended are sample copies of a master schedule, a long-term contract, a student checklist, and a grade record sheet. (MLF)

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SAVING LOWER-ENROLLMENT, ADVANCED-LEVEL ELECTIVE PROGRAMS: A WAY TO GET BLOOD FROM TURNIPS

A Paper

Presented at

The 1984 Convention of the

National Association of Laboratory Schools

San Antonio, Texas

by

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Saving Lower-Enrollment, Advanced-Level
Elective Programs:

A Way to Get Blood from Turnips

This paper has two primary purposes: (1) to describe how we manage to offer 5-year sequences of courses in both French and Spanish in a very small school in spite of prohibitively low enrollments, and (2) to suggest, perhaps hypothesize, even fantasize how our model can be applied to other traditionally lower-enrollment, advanced-level elective courses. And I am not limiting myself to such "fringe" areas as foreign language, art, and music. I believe our idea has merit in the "mainstream" areas such as math, science, social studies, and language arts as well.

Our laboratory school has a very small pool from which to draw students for elective courses, and while our beginning courses have consistently had more-than-satisfactory enrollments, a variety of factors has limited enrollments in advanced classes: two language choices, competition not only from other equally attractive elective programs but from courses required for graduation, a six-period school day, fewer sections of all courses school-wide, competition from other schools in the city and even the local University (e.g., early college credit), and others all serve to limit students' choice and make scheduling an administrative nightmare (see Book, 1982, 1984, for further discussion).

Our solution is a deceptively simple scheduling technique that allows any student beyond the first year, regardless of age and language being studied, to schedule "Advanced Foreign Language" during the hours in which this "dummy course" appears in the master schedule (see Fig. I). This means that an eighth grader in second-year French, for example, may be continuing his or her studies along side a junior in third-year Spanish. In fact, I have had one class in which two levels of Spanish and four levels of French were being offered to nine students during one hour. I affectionately call such groups my "zoo"

classes, and the flexibility of the offering allows the advanced levels to not only survive but to thrive.

Of course, such a scheduling technique is impossible without individualized pacing and individualized instruction. Students progress through a corpus of lessons designed and/or organized for such an individualized format. Progress is assured by two kinds of contracts students negotiate. Long-term contracts are negotiated each quarter (Figure II), which allow students to pursue individual interests and maximize given talents. Short-term contracts are negotiated on a daily/weekly basis as to homework, speaking and reading exercises, quizzes and tests, and other contractual obligations. For each core lesson, students are provided a "Check List" (Figure III shows a model), which details all the requirements for the lesson and facilitates record keeping.

There are numerous advantages to such an approach, and I have detailed them elsewhere (Book, 1982, 1984). Suffice it to say that this approach has been very successful in our situation. All it takes is one student to offer fifth year French, for example. He or she takes that course along with the other advanced students of both French and Spanish. He or she continues to learn, and the other students benefit from his or her presence in the classroom. I like the system, our administrators like it, and the kids and their parents like it, too. It works.

My contention in this paper is that teachers of other elective programs can adopt a similar approach in their situations. Consider high school mathematics. Advanced courses such as solid geometry, trigonometry, math analysis, and pre-calculus do not typically enjoy high enrollments. Moreover, in smaller schools, such as laboratory schools, there is rarely sufficient enrollment to offer these courses regularly in the math curriculum. However, since math students at that level tend to be highly motivated anyway, "zoo class" offerings such as I have described might be feasible alternatives. The same seems true

of science courses such as advanced biology, chemistry, and physics. Teachers can structure these courses for individualized pacing and individualized instruction such that they can be offered simultaneously, I believe. Advanced levels of art (sculpture, pottery, weaving, drawing, design), of language arts (composition, literary criticism, oratory, debate), social studies (economics, comparative government, psychology, sociology, current events), even music (composition, theory, performance, criticism) can all be structured in the way I have suggested. All it takes is commitment and work. Lots of both.

Some in this audience are questioning, and rightfully so, the seeming lack of group interaction in such a format, especially in such discussion-oriented disciplines as social studies and language arts. This real concern has not materialized in my experience in foreign languages. Rather, students' experiences seem to reinforce and complement other students' language experience, both informally and formally. I periodically do large-group work in which we discuss ideas, concepts, and themes that transcend language-specific issues. Students often suggest topics for such "interaction" sessions, be they culture, linguistics, economics, history, geography, travel. My French students, for example, often "listen in" on discussions of Spanish structures, grammar, or culture, providing impromptu, albeit rudimentary, comparative sociolinguistics, and it is gratifying to note that several advanced-level students of one language have enrolled in the beginning levels of the other language. I insist that a similar phenomenon could occur among serious students of the sciences and other humanities, if given the chance.

However, I must offer some caveats, too. Such an approach as described here is impossible without, first and foremost, an expressed, overt commitment to the philosophy behind individualized pacing and instruction. Teachers must believe that the concept will work, or else it is futile to try. Second, it

has been my experience that classes organized on such a basis require much more energy and concentrated effort than teacher-centered methods. To illustrate, continuous shifts from one language to another is, in plain terms, hard work. Third, removing the teacher from the center of the day's activities requires a stronger grasp of the subject matter than in teacher-centered approaches since the student questions are spontaneous and impromptu, and their explanations are much harder to anticipate. Fourth, the amount of paperwork has required us to design a rather complex system of record keeping (Figure IV shows our quarter grade sheet).

Finally, one last caveat deserves attention from those attracted to such an individualized approach. This centers on what I call "ego problems." In individualized pacing situations such as ours, the teacher is no longer the center of attention, no longer dominates the day's learning activities, no longer is "the star of the show," so-to-speak. Rather, he or she becomes a facilitator, advisor, diagnostician, counselor. The subject matter, in turn, becomes the primary motivator, and I, quite frankly, miss "being on," having the chance to present new material, to entertain, to hold the attention of a group of students. In essence, I miss the performance aspect of the craft of teaching, and even some of my students have commented that they miss that aspect, too.

However, so it must be if advanced levels of our foreign language program are to continue to be offered in our very small school. And, so it may be in other programs in other schools by teachers who see the possibilities of expanding the offerings in any of several elective disciplines and extending advanced subjects to interested and deserving students. In my opinion, if teachers want to offer lower-enrollment, advanced-level elective courses, but are wary of enrollment figures, the framework offered here is one proven way of beating the numbers.

Figure I

Master Schedule

UNIVERSITY MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

MASTER SCHEDULE

1983-84

INSTRUCTOR	1st Hour 8:00-8:50	2nd Hour 9:00-9:50	3rd Hour 10:00-10:50	4th Hour 11:00-11:50	12:15-12:50	5th Hour 1:00-1:50	6th Hour 2:00-2:50
BEIER ITE 201						Industrial Exploration	Industrial Technology M.S.
BISHOP Room 109			Art II & III	Art I		Art I	M.S. Art / M.S. Art
BOOK Room 110		Intermediate Spanish M.S.	M.S.-H.S. Adv. Foreign Lang.	M.S. Beginning French		Advanced H.S. Foreign Lang.	Beginning French
DAUME Room 408						Home Ec. I	Home Ec. II & Middle School
Dougan Room 104	PLAN	World Cultures	Family Rel. / Human Rel.	Geography		World Cultures	Yearbook
GRAHAM Room 112	Pre-College Rhetoric	World Literature	American Literature	PLAN		American Literature	Advanced Gram. & Comp.
HUTER Room 108	Typing II	Typing I	Consumer Ed. / Consumer Ed.	Typing I		Accounting	PLAN
JENKERSON Magill 151	6 Math	7-8 A Math	7-8 B Math	7-8 B Science	7-8 A Science	6 Science	PLAN
MANSFIELD OCS	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education		Physical Education	PLAN
MC CUTCHAN Music Room	4-5	2-3	K-1	Band		PLAN	Beginning Band
MYLES Room 101	7-8 A Social Studies	7-8 B Readings in Literature	6th Social Studies	Supervised Study	Readings in Literature	7-8 B Social Studies	PLAN
SCHENIMANN Room 116	7-8 B Language Arts	6th Language Arts	Supervised Study	PLAN	LEAP	7-8 A Language Arts	Fund. Lang. Exp.
SEYER Music Room						H.S. Chorus	M.S. Chorus
SIMMONS Room 106	Biology	Physical Science	General Science	PLAN		Biology	General Science
THEOBALD Commons/OCS	5-4	3-2	I-K	Health (Rm 408) / Health		PLAN	M.S. Physical Education
THRUN Room 103	American History	Contemporary Issues	Consumer Math / Consumer Math	Sociology / Psychology		PLAN	American History
WHITLOW Room 114	Introduction to Oral Comm.	Communicative Reporting	Theatre I & II	Forensics			
AUSTIN Room 305	General Math	Algebra I	Algebra II	PLAN / Computer Math		Algebra I	Comp. Lit. M.S. / PLAN

Figure II

Long-Term Contract

C O N T R A C T

Name _____ _____ _____ Quarter, 19____

Course _____ Date _____

To avoid failing the quarter, the student must complete all tests in lesson _____. Having completed no more than the tests in lesson _____ will result in a grade no higher than D+ for the quarter.

QUARTER: D : finish lesson _____

To receive a more satisfactory evaluation for the quarter (A, B, C), the student must either complete all the tests and exercises for or make satisfactory progress[1] into lesson _____, as indicated below.

QUARTER: A / B / C : finish / make satisfactory progress into lesson_____

To avoid failing the semester, the student must complete all tests in lesson _____. Having completed no more than the tests in lesson _____ will result in a grade no higher than D+ for the semester.

SEMESTER: D : finish lesson _____

To receive a more satisfactory evaluation for the semester (A, B, C), the student must either complete all the tests and exercises for or make satisfactory progress[1] into lesson _____, as indicated below.

SEMESTER A / B / C finish / make satisfactory progress into lesson_____

OTHER PERTINENT CRITERIA:

[1]"Satisfactory progress" means completing successfully all quizzes for a given lesson, or as otherwise indicated below by the instructor:

Instructor _____ Student _____

Figure III

Student Check List

A-LM French I

Lesson 6

STUDENT CHECK LIST
LESSON 6

Name _____
Date Started _____
Date Completed _____

Item	Evaluation						Comments
ORAL EXERCISES	%	date	%	date	%	date	checked by:
1. Ex. 5, p.100							
2. Ex. 8, p.101							
3. Ex. 9, p.101							
4. Ex's 14, 16, p.104							
5. Ex. 20, p.106-107							
6. Ex. 21, p.107							
7. Ex. 25, p.108							
8. Ex. 26, p.108							
9. Ex. 28, p.109							
10. Ex. 114, p. WB 20							
11. Ex. 121, p WB 21							
12. Ex. 124, p. WB22 (optional)							

WRITING EXERCISES	+/o/-	date	+/o/-	date	+/o/-	date	contract?
1. Ex. 1, p. 98							
2. Ex. 3, p. 98							
3. Ex. 4, p. 98							
4. Ex. 7, p. 100							
5. Ex. 10, p. 102							
6. Ex. 31, p. 109							
7. "Spelling Note 2", p. 114							

SPEAKING EXERCISES	+/o/-	date	+/o/-	date	+/o/-	date	contract?
1. Ex. 1, p. 98							
2. Ex. 3, p. 98							
3. Ex's 7 & 10, pp. 100, 102							
4. Ex. 31, p. 109							

READING EXERCISES	+/o/-	date	+/o/-	date	+/o/-	date	contract?
1. Basic Dialog, p.95							
2. Dialogs, pp. 110-111							
3. Questions (short answer)							
4. Sound ↔ Letter, pp. 112-114							

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p. 2 of 2

STUDENT CHECK LIST

LESSON 6

Name _____

Item	Evaluation						Comments
WORKBOOK EXERCISES	+/o/-	date	+/o/-	date	+/o/-	date	
1. Ex. 1, p. WB65							
2. Ex. 2, p. W65							
3. Ex. 3, p. W66							
4. Ex. 4, p. W67 * See instructor for instructions *							
5. Ex. 5, p. W67 * See instructor for instructions *							
6. Ex. 6, p. W68							
7. Ex. 7, p. W68							
8. Ex. 9, p. W69							
9. Ex. 10, p. W70 (optional)							
VOCABULARY CHECKS	✓	date	✓	date	✓	date	checked by:
1. Basic Dialog, p. 95							
2. Supplement, p. 96							
3. Basic Forms, p. 97							
4. Ex. 4, p. 98							

QUIZZES TESTS	CONTRACT DATES			
1. Vocabulary Quiz				
2. Indefinite Articles Quiz				
3. "Future Substitute" Quiz				
4. Written Test				
5. Listening Comprehension Test				

Figure IV

Grade Record Sheet

STUDENT _____ _____ _____ QUARTER, 19___
last first (foreign) grade

COURSE _____ _____ CONTRACT? ____ yes ____ no
title number

Week	1					2					3					4				
Day	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F
Unit																				
Sub-concept																				
Nature of Activity: Basic																				
Remedial																				
Speaking																				
Writing																				
Reading																				
Form																				
Evaluation																				
Comments																				

Week	5					6					7					8					9				
Day	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F
Unit																									
Sub-concept																									
Basic																									
Remedial																									
Speaking																									
Writing																									
Reading																									
Form																									
Evaluation																									
Comments																									

Quarter Grade_____ Semester Grade_____

COMMENTS:

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Book, L.C. Continuous progress, individualized pacing, and foreign languages: Fighting the numbers game. National Association of Laboratory Schools Journal, 7 (3), Winter 1982, 1-5.

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